

SEH News

Minutes of the 13th Ordinary General Business Meeting of SEH, Bonn, Germany, 1st October 2005

Venue: Hall of Derag Hotel "Kanzler", Bonn, Germany.

The attendance sheet was signed by 31 people.

Numbering of agenda items follows those in the Agenda printed in the 13th Congress Abstract Book, October 2005.

- 1. Report of the President.** Opening of the meeting. By the President, N. Ananjeva, at 14h15. Election of meeting Chair (Statute §4.4). The General Secretary, M.A.L. Zuffi, was elected. Approval of the minutes of the 12th Ordinary General Meeting (OGM) in St Petersburg, Russia, 15 August 2003. The minutes were approved unanimously; no abstentions. The President, N. Ananjeva, presents a short verbal report, concerning the past 12th SEH Congress, and announces that the Proceedings of the congress will be soon available and shipped to participants. No more comments were received. In the name of the assembly the chairman thanks the President for the organisation of the OGM.
- 2. Report of the General Secretary.** The General Secretary, M.A.L. Zuffi apologizes for not having sent all information regarding elections during the present OGM. He presents a short report of his activities during first two years, mainly regarding the attempt to organise the congress in Sardinia, as established in the last OGM in St. Petersburg. There were no comments.
- 3. Report of the Treasurer.** The auditors (Silvia Zumbach and Klaus Henle) communicated their apologies not being present and sent specific reports on SEH finances. The financial situation was reported to be regular and correct. The accounts were approved unanimously. No comments on this subject were presented. Jakob Hallermann, Treasurer, presented his report which can be downloaded at <http://www.gli.cas.cz/SEH/structure/financial.htm>
- 4. Report by the Chair of the Conservation Committee.** The Chair, Anton Stumpel, reads a report on the activities of the CC during the past two years, the situation of impasse derived from the retirement of the previous Chair Keith Corbett and proposals and ideas for overcoming this unfortunate situation.
- 5. Report of the Editors of Amphibia-Reptilia.** The third Co-Editor, Mathieu Denoël, presents the changes that occurred in the journal since the last O.G.M., i.e. the new layout and increased number of pages (600/year) without prize increase, the increasing rejection rate (65%), the on-line access of each paper individually, the new advisory editorial board, the shift to electronic procedures for all correspondence, the presentation of more detailed instructions to authors, the call for submissions of reviews on hot topics, and new ideas to improve the quality services and impact factor of Amphibia-Reptilia within one or two years. All these new procedures helped to reduce the large backlog of papers and allow now a fast publication service that should encourage authors to submit high quality papers. The details of this report are published in Amphibia-Reptilia 26: 587-588.
- 6. Report of the Web-Master.** The Web-Master, Edoardo Razzetti, illustrates the increasing number to the Herpnet mailing list activity, now at more than 400 members. He reports also that the continued update of the web page resulted in an intensified world wide interest. This became obvious through an interesting slide with all the "hot spots" in the world from where the SEH webpage was contacted, although central Europe, not surprisingly, hosts the largest number of contacts. The General Secretary asks a standing minute of silence to commemorate the members Michael Lambert and Jens Rassmussen recently passed away.
- 7. Statute changes.** M. Zuffi proposes to elect Miguel Vences as speaker for the Statutes changes about which M. Vences was in charge to do during the past months. Changes to the Statutes and By-laws had been announced earlier in 2005 in Amphibia-Reptilia and the details had been sent to members via e-mail and posted on the website several months before the OGM in order to comply with regulations in the Statutes. Several changes regarded the equivalence between the language of legal documents (German) and that used for usual communications (English). Additional changes concerned the inclusion of a Third Co-Editor as member of the Council, and some changes that would allow, in exceptional cases, to be more flexible regarding the two-year periods in which Council members need to be elected or re-elected. After having explained most of changes performed and having read relevant changes, the assembly vote unanimously. Changes were approved by unanimity. The details of these changes are presented separately in the same issue.
- 8. Position of Mapping and Conservation Committee and role of Chairs within the SEH Council.** This issue has provoked an intense even if short discussion. Claudia Corti proposes to start immediately with a new Mapping Committee. Kurt

Grossenbacher explains that the Environment Ministry in France has finished supporting the activities of the MC based in Paris as they previously did. Miguel Carretero and Marco Zuffi propose to acknowledge Patrick Haffner and Jean-Pierre Gasc (former Mapping Committee chairs) at the same time asking if they were still interested to join the incoming Committee. M. Zuffi is in charge to take contacts with Haffner and Gasc and reports immediately to the Council. Afterwards, an official query on Herpnet and on the Web page as well shall be printed in order to stimulate possible candidates for the Chair of the Mapping Committee. Sergé Bogaerts proposes meanwhile that an updated list of the atlases published could be put in the SEH website and then volunteers to do it. This proposal is accepted by the assembly.

9. **Communication between Brill and the Council, image of SEH and members.** As pointed out by Mathieu Denoël, communication has been largely improved between Brill and the society, particularly the editors. However, Jakob Hallermann informs about communication problems remaining with respect to membership update and address changes.
10. **Communication between the Society and the members.** M. Zuffi says that it shall be important to write more often than before directly to members and with official letters on Herpnet and the web page to keep the members informed about topics of common interest. Since the e-mail addresses are available for most of them, this way of communication is to be promoted.
11. **Activity plans for 15.00 Euro members.** It is proposed by Claudia Corti to ameliorate the distribution maps of our herpetofauna on the web page as possible outcome for those members that do not receive the journal.
12. **Conservation funds for SEH grants.** Due to the small number of applicants (two only at the official dead line of 31st August) and the recently donated sum of £1000,00 by Dr Lambert, the General Secretary, M. Zuffi, declares that after the new dead line (15th October) two prizes shall be given (2000,00 Euro and 1000,00 Euro, the second entitled to Michael Lambert).
13. **Venue for the next 2007 SEH congress.** No one possible venue is presented and, after a short discussion, it is decided to ask informally for any suitable place and at the same time to send official queries to Herpnet and on the Web page.
- 14a. **Council members re-election.** According to the statutes (§5 Council) “the members of the Council will be elected for staggered terms”. At this time, re-eligible posts were those of President, vice-Secretary, Treasurer, second Co-Editor. Auditors

must be elected each two years. The results are the following:

	For	Against	Abstention
N. Ananjeva (President)	28	1	1
M. Carretero (vice-Secretary)	27	0	2
J. Hallermann (Treasurer)	29	0	2
L. Luiselli (Second Co-Editor)	26	1	2
Five votes were invalid			

14b. Election of new Auditors. Sebastian Steinfartz and Benedickt Schmidt have been elected as new auditors.

15. Varia. No varia are presented.

16. The meeting was closed by the President, N. Ananjeva, at 17h30.

Prepared initially by Miguel Carretero, Vice Secretary, Vairão, 22nd October 2005, and forwarded to General Secretary on 4th November 2005. Amended, linguistically adjusted, approved and provisionally edited by Marco A.L. Zuffi, General Secretary, Calci (Pisa), 28th October 2005.

Statutes changes

We here reproduce the English version of the changes of the statutes as they have been accepted at the 13th Ordinary General Meeting. Further minor changes were also passed on the By-laws. The final Statutes and By-laws, in English as well as in the legally official language German (as SEH is registered in Germany), after including the changes plus some minor typographical corrections, will be made available from the SEH website.

1. Change in §3 **membership**, section 3.1.: Modify “*written application*” to “*application in writing or email*”.

To allow membership applications via email.

2. Change in §3, section 3.1. Add: *Membership only becomes effective upon receipt of the membership fee.*

Introduces payment of membership fee as condition for the acceptance as member.

3. Changes in §3, sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2. Delete twice: “*registered*”.

Notes of resignation and notification of membership termination do not need to be sent by registered mail.

4. Add to §4 **general meeting**, section 4.1: *If an Extraordinary General Meeting has been held, the following Ordinary General Meeting can be postponed by the Council to until two years after.*

This allows greater flexibility in the scheduling of SEH congresses and OGMs, in order to be able to overcome the two-year periodicity if required, e.g., to avoid overlap with other venues.

5. Add to §5 **council**, section 5.1.: “*Third Co-Editor*” as additional member of the Council. Change in section 5.2. “*First and Third Co-Editor*” as council members to be elected during one of the alternating OGMs.

6. Add to §5, section 5.1, that Council decisions will be voted by a simple majority of votes “*which include those of the Committee Chairs*”.

This allows the Committee chairs (co-opted council members) to actively participate in Council decisions.

7. Add to §5, section 5.1: *"The Council can also take decisions inbetween Council Meetings if the absolute majority of all Council members and Committee Chairs agree to the decision in writing or by email"*.

This will allow the Council to take official decisions by email contact inbetween Council meetings, and reduces the need of a high frequency of Council meetings.

8. Add a new section 5.6. to §5: *"In extraordinary cases the General Meeting can decide upon a prolongation of the office period of Council members by no more than one year, to a maximum of five years. This has no consequences on the duration of a possible second office period after re-election"*. Also add at the end of last sentence in section 5.2 *"with exceptions only as stated in §5.6"*.

Together with the change no. 4 as proposed above, this will allow future SEH councils to change the two-year periodicity of OGMs and SEH Council election (i.e., from impair to pair years, and vice-versa) if required.

9. Change §9 **Dissolution of the association**, section 9.3, to read: *"In case of dissolution, or loss of tax exemption under German laws ("steuerbegünstigte Zwecke"), the property of the association is to be used for aims qualifying for such tax exemption ("steuerbegünstigte Zwecke"). In such a case, decisions of the use of the property of the association can only be taken upon written agreement of German tax authorities ("Finanzamt")"*.

This change is a formal requirement requested by the German tax authorities in order to continue tax exemption for SEH.

Report of the SEH Conservation Committee 2003-2005

The last SEH Conservation Committee (CC) meeting was held in September 2003 in Ravlunda, Sweden, shortly after the St. Petersburg Congress. As this CC meeting was connected to the Council of Europe convened meeting of the 'Group of Experts on the Conservation of Amphibians and Reptiles', only seven members attended. The previous CC Chair, Keith Corbett, resigned his post at this meeting due to his impending retirement. The SEH members present voted for the undersigned to take over as new Chair. We all realised how unique Keith Corbett's position as Chair had been. Working in the U.K. at the Herpetological Conservation Trust (HCT) had enabled him to fully integrate his SEH role with his daily work. None of the other members were in a similar position. At the same time, the work of the CC had reached an impasse, on the one hand due to the completion of reports to the Council of Europe, for the Bern Convention, and on the other because of the problems faced by members in combining CC work with the ever increasing work loads at their own offices of employment. A new CC policy clearly needs to be developed and the future structure and composition of the committee should be considered critically. In the meantime, Keith's colleagues at HCT, Paul Edgar and Tony Gent, most kindly offered assistance and it was agreed that the three of us would continue Keith's work

for the CC. Apart from intensive and regular telephone and e-mail dealings, we also held interim working meetings in both the UK in 2004 and the Netherlands in 2005.

Many CC activities from the previous period have been continued. Bern Convention meetings were attended in Strasbourg in both 2003 and 2004. Many important new contacts were made here and support was given for issues concerning turtles in Cyprus and Turkey and Hermann's tortoises in France. As a result of the Ravlunda meeting, we were also commissioned by the Council of Europe to produce Species Action Plans for three threatened reptiles (the sand lizard, the Aesculapian snake and the meadow viper) and two amphibians (the crested newt species complex and the Italian agile frog). These Plans were subcontracted to HCT to write and will all be presented to the Bern Convention Standing Committee this December, together with a further CC report on recent taxonomic changes to the European herpetofauna.

We have also been involved in the continuing problems with marine turtles in the Mediterranean, visiting sites in Greece and Turkey and assessing the impacts of threats. In May 2005, Paul Edgar gave a presentation at the 2nd Mediterranean Sea Turtle Conference, in Kemer, Turkey, which outlined some of the past achievements of the CC and its work with MEDASSET. Planning is also underway to address the Zakynthos situation in Greece and the CC are working closely on this with WWF, who will shortly be meeting the EC Environment Commissioner, Stavros Dimas, to discuss this difficult issue.

Tony Gent represents the CC on the European Habitats Forum, a consortium of environmental and conservation NGOs. This greatly strengthens our involvement with the European Union and allows us to play a key role in exchanging information between NGO's at a European level. We have also been heavily involved in the NGO contribution to the development of the concept of Favourable Conservation Status (FCS). In particular, Tony Gent has chaired the Article 12 Working Group meetings in Brussels, which look at the interpretation and implementation of Article 12 of the EU Habitats Directive (concerning the strict protection of species).

Initiatives have also been developed for a pan-European project to define FCS, and its associated monitoring requirements, for several amphibian and reptile species in a number of EU Member States. This project is being carried out in conjunction with IUCN, WWF, BirdLife, Bat Conservation Trust and other NGOs, and will help to inform the EC's advice to the 25 EU Governments about their FCS reporting requirements in January 2007. A brief report has already been submitted to the September 2005 meeting of the Scientific Working Group of the EC's Habitats Committee and a more substantial document is in preparation by Paul Edgar.

Good progress has been made on the Important Herpetofaunal Areas in Europe (IHA) project, adopted by the CC, with the CC Chair coordinating efforts across Europe. However, this project has been seriously delayed by a lack of promised input from many contributors. This may be due to a reluctance to publicise the locations of rare herpetofauna, a view that was expressed strongly at a meeting in Russia on the conservation of the Caucasian herpetofauna,

where Paul Edgar gave a brief talk about the IHA project. In many ways this is understandable, but the potential risks of IHAs must be balanced against the need to ensure such sites are adequately protected. An interim IHA report is now in preparation and it is hoped that this will stimulate renewed enthusiasm when it is available on the project's web site. A further problem, however, is likely to be faced in finding the funds for the completion of the project and publication of the IHA book.

At present, the three of us are still considering how the CC can best continue to function. We need to breathe new life into the CC, many of whose members no longer have the time to participate. We should, for example, encourage new members to join, organise more meetings and possibly set up an e-mail group. In any event, we must find a way to carry out our conservation work in the most effective way into the future. Increased involvement with the national herpetological societies goes without saying and our work for the Bern Convention and the European Union, especially in making site and species status assessments, must be continued. These activities could be combined with future

meetings as, thanks to generous donations by SEH members to the CC, we have possibilities of traveling in Europe. Feedback to the Council and membership of SEH also need to be considerably improved. Biannual reports only are obviously not enough and, in the future, we will seek ways to report to SEH more efficiently and on a much more regular basis.

The Conservation Committee continues to achieve a lot of important conservation work and SEH has become a well-known NGO all over Europe. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the enthusiastic and persistent efforts, over a 22-year period, of our previous Chair, Keith Corbett. His contribution was invaluable and it will not be easy for any of us to match him.

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Anton Stumpel (Chair), Bennekom, 1st October 2005